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SALT Verification Information

Sensitive Intelligence Data Made Available to Senators

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The Carter administration has given the Senate a half-inch sheaf of papers that contain some of America's most sensitive intelligence secrets.

An administration official claims that the papers contain an unprecedented profusion of details and descriptions of intelligence-gathering satellites and ground stations like those now imperiled by civil strife in Iran.

This wealth of information has been passed on in hopes of creating a climate for Senate ratification of the SALT II Treaty being negotiated with the Soviet Union.

The material was requested by Sen. John Glenn, D-Ohio, a former astronaut who has been particularly concerned about U.S. ability to monitor Soviet strategic might.

"I ASKED THEM to put down each and every treaty requirement and the means of verifying it," Glenn said. The point, he went on, was to show the Senate the "blanks and weak spots."

Glenn said the SALT process "is a confidence-building thing. That means verifying what they do."

Glenn has asked for an update of the material to take in account treaty language negotiated with the Soviet Union last month in Geneva. In the meantime the senator says he is withholding judgment on administration claims that the treaty is verifiable.

The material provided Glenn was turned over to the Senate Intelligence Committee where any senator may examine it.

"It's prepared in sort of a matrix," says one Senate staff member. "A senator can look at the treaty provisions and then almost run his finger

down the line to see how that translates into a specific requirement and how that requirement is met, by satellites or whatever."

CRITICS AND proponents alike have focused on verification as a key issue in the SALT debate. One particularly troublesome element has been the Soviet practice of putting information from missile tests into code. Critics say U.S. negotiators have failed to remedy this problem in negotiations at Geneva.

The coding — or inscription — issue is one that also troubles potential SALT supporters such as Glenn.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is conducting its own assessment of the adequacy of SALT verification. And its report will likely become an important factor in the debate. Treaty talks broke down last month in Geneva because, most American officials suggest, the Soviet Union decided to hold off on conclusion of the pact until the events surrounding the dramatic U.S. recognition of the People's Republic of China played themselves out.

In the meantime the administration has been following a pattern that was established in earlier difficult foreign policy issues concerning the Congress. President Carter has been meeting with a number of key senators while other aides have conducted a series of briefings at the White House for Senate staff members.

The White House also is reviving a congressional stroking technique it has used to good effect in the past. Beginning tomorrow, the White House will have a series of dinners for members of Congress that will be followed by a three-hour, Cabinet-level presentation on U.S. foreign policy.

Members of the Senate leadership and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee are due this week.

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